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Die Feldgemeinschaft in Russland. Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte und zur Kenntniss der gegenwärtigen wirthschaftlichen Lage des russischen Bauernstandes. By WLADIMIR Gr. SIMKHOWITSCH. Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1898. 8vo. pp. xvi+399.

THE village or *Mir* system of land ownership and cultivation is, as is well known, still the prevailing one over a large part of the Russian Empire. In its superficial aspects this system resembles so closely the organization advocated as an ideal form by certain socialists that a careful analysis of its leading characteristics by a Russian, who is himself in sympathy with socialistic aspirations, has a peculiar interest. Herr Sinkhowitsch has still another qualification for his task. When he began collecting material for his monograph, shortly after the famine of 1893, he regarded the *Mir* system as an excellent thing. As a result of his study, as he explains in his preface, he has reached the conclusion that "the ownership of land in common," as it prevails in Russia, "is in every respect an unjust and untenable institution, . . . which makes the Russian peasantry the most miserable proletariat in the world." The "equality" supposed to result from the system he now regards as a "dream," while he is fully convinced that "the institution as a whole has already reached the last stage in its decomposition." He thus presents the main thesis in his essay with the eloquence of a recent convert.

The first hundred pages of the monograph deal with the origin and history of the village system. Though no one but a specialist would be competent to decide as to their value, one who is not such may venture to point out that their tone, which is frankly argumentative rather than judicial, suggests that the author is too full of his own side of the case to take an impartial view of that of his adversary. His conclusions are clearly expressed, and may be summarized as follows: The *Mir* system is not hoary with antiquity, as some assert, nor yet an offshoot of the Teutonic *Mark* system, as others claim. It grew out of the feudal system, and, like that system, attained its greatest extension under Catherine II. (1762-1796), who reduced the Russian peasant to a position little above that of a slave. Thus the most important feature of the system, historically, was not joint ownership of land, but joint responsibility for taxes and other burdens. Like his English prototype, the Russian over-lord found it easier to deal with corporately responsible villages than with single individuals. Firmly established

when feudalism was abolished in 1861, the *Mir* has been perpetuated by the government, partly because it, too, finds the village an easy unit for taxing purposes and partly from that fear of radical change that is the inevitable accompaniment of despotic rule.

The present organization of the *Mir* and some of the problems connected with it are discussed in the body of the monograph. The author shows how the system has been unified by recent edicts until now a single plan of village government is practically universal. The membership of the *Mir* may be confined to an official list of villagers, modified from time to time by the *Mir* itself, or it may embrace all of the heads of families in the village, or it may be extended to include all adults born or adopted into the *Mir*. The principal task of the *Mir* government is the division of the common land. This may only take place in consequence of a two thirds affirmative vote, and since June 2, 1893, may not occur more often than once every twelve years, unless the *Mir* has decided to dissolve. Dissolution may take place any time that two thirds of the members of the village desire, and is preceded by a final division of the common land, which thereafter becomes private property. At each general division the land is supposed to be divided equally between all members, as are taxes and other burdens. Meadows, commons, and forests are of course used in common, as are some of the necessary agricultural implements.

The final chapter in this part of the monograph discusses "the disadvantages of common ownership." At the outset, the author acknowledges the force of the statement made by Mackenzie Wallace, that to ascribe the backward condition of Russian agriculture to the *Mir* is as reasonable as to connect the American Indian's lack of proficiency in classical philology with the absence of universities from his prairies. Nevertheless he shows how the *Mir* system discourages in countless ways the development of intelligence, enterprise and thrift, and prevents that assimilation of western ideas and that imitation of western methods which but for it would almost certainly take place. Three of these obstacles merit special mention : (1) The joint responsibility of all peasants for the taxes falling upon their village discourages the accumulation of capital. The property of the successful cultivator may at any time be seized to pay the dues of his unsuccessful neighbors, and the only sure way to escape this calamity is to avoid having any tangible property. The situation is thus similar to that which prevailed in rural France before the Revolution,

when to display wealth was to court disaster. (2) The frequent re-divisions of the village land discourage cultivators from undertaking any permanent improvements. Though mitigated in part by the decree of 1893, referred to above, this is still a serious evil. (3) The increase in population has rendered the allotments in many villages "dwarfish" in size, and prevents the peasantry from aiming at anything beyond eking out a miserable existence. The general conclusions of the author are that though the *Mir* cannot be held responsible for all the shortcomings of the Russian peasantry it is largely to blame for their lack of ambition, of capital, and of acquaintance with modern methods of cultivation. Though favoring socialism as an ultimate goal, he believes with the followers of Karl Marx in the educational value of competitive capitalistic production as a stage in national development. He believes that private property and freedom of contract must be carried to the same lengths in Russia that they have been in the western world before the people will be ready to substitute for the unrestricted despotism to which they now submit, the wished-for social democracy. Finally, he believes that Russian officialdom is already struggling between the horns of a painful dilemma. It is realized, on the one hand, that the *Mir* must go if the revenue of the government is to be increased appreciably, since by its abolition alone can the productiveness of the land of the country be greatly increased. On the other hand, it is perceived with equal clearness that the *Mir* organization alone keeps the peasantry in the mediæval attitude of mind indispensable to the stability of the Czar's power. In the author's opinion, the forces making for the suppression of the *Mir* are too strong to be successfully opposed, but he ventures no prediction as to the time that will elapse before these forces triumph.

Though full of valuable information, and conceived in a scientific spirit, the monograph is badly arranged, bristles with typographical errors—over a hundred being noted by the author himself—and is without an index.

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The Modern Farmer in His Business Relations. By EDWARD F. ADAMS. San Francisco: N. J. Stone Co., 1899. 8vo. pp. 662.

SOME men write books for the doctor's degree. Some write for